CHURCH NEWS

FROM THE NORTHERN COUNTRIES

Edited by
THE NORTHERN ECUMENICAL INSTITUTE
Sigtuna, Sweden

Director: Dr. HARRY JOHANSSON, Sigtuna, Sweden
Editor: Rev. JOHS. LANGHOFF, Øster Egesborg per Mern, Denmark

. 65 February 7th, 1961.

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DENMARK

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Father Duclos quotes a statement by Cardinal Bea that, although here can never be any compromise as far as the Creed is concerned, his may be possible in respect of liturgy, administration, and discipli- e, and he continues: "We consider the Roman Catholic Church the true hurch of Christ and this can never be otherwise."

One of the most important things in the ecumenical intercourse, he Father goes on, is a sense of humour, to be understood as a sense of roportions. The spiritual imperialism evident in the Roman Church - nd in other Churches as well, for that matter - stems from a belief f being in possession of the truth. But truth cannot be possessed - t must be served! There is much of a human origin in the Church, the rticle continues, and one ought to have enough sense of humour to rea- ize this. The human aspects of the Roman Catholic Church are no better han those of, for instance, the Eastern Churches. "If we, while triving for the reunion in faith of all Christians, should attempt to orce our Latin views on others, we should be guilty of a lack of espect for truth and for our brethren."

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rmer Roman Catholic Priest Wants to Become a Lutheran Pastor.

A former Roman Catholic priest in Copenhagen, Mr. Thorbjørn Møller, s approached Bishop K.C. Holm, Odense, with a wish to become a clergy- n in the Danish Lutheran National Church. This is the first time such application has been received from a former Roman Catholic priest, d attempts will be made, in connection with an amendment to the Act on cess to Ecclesiastical Offices, to make the fulfilment of the wish asible. The same amendment would make it possible for a couple of rmer Methodist ministers, having expressed their desire in this direc- on, to enter into the services of the Lutheran National Church.

Mr. Thorbjørn Møller resigned his office a number of years ago and ined the Lutheran National Church, was married, and has been employed ntil now as a teacher at a secondary school in Svendborg. - In the urse of years several former ministers in the Lutheran National Church ave converted to Rome and two of them are now employed as priests in e Roman Church.

The amendment to the Act on Access to Ecclesiastical Offices in the utheran National Church which was introduced by the Ministry of Church ffairs aims at making it easier for the laity, people with a University egree other than that in Lutheran Theology in particular, to become lergymen. The reason for this step is not an approaching shortage f clergymen which has been noticeable recently, but a point of view e expressed by the Minister of Church Affairs, Mrs. Bodil Koch, in a tatement to the "Kristeligt Dagblad":

"It is of the utmost importance to maintain the present standard f theological training, but in the intricate society in which we live t would be well if people with another University training could have reater opportunities of applying for Church livings."

ntraditional Church in the "Young People's Town" in Copenhagen.

One of the first buildings to be completed in the "Young People's own" now under construction at Rødovre, a suburb of Copenhagen, is a hurch. The "Town" is intended as demonstration centre where children nd young people may learn about community life and its problems, arious occupations, and similar subjects. The original plan did not nclude a church, but, this defect having been pointed out by the Kristeligt Dagblad", the well-known church architect, Mr. Holger Jensen offered to design a church free of charge. The Copenhagen Church Foun- lation promised its support, a tile-works supplied free bricks, the ocational school of bricklayer's apprentices, many different quarters gave financial supports, and a short while ago the work had advanced so ar that one could invite to a celebration for the builders when the oof of the building was pitched.

The church resembles the inward spiral of a snail shell with no ews save a bench along the wall, this wall to be decorated by children with illustrations of events from Bible and Church history. The church an seat 100-140 children and young people.

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ews in Brief:

The Ministries of Finance, of Church Affairs, and of Education ave approved a plan for turning a medieval building in Copenhagen, he "Helligåndshuset" (House of the Holy Ghost) which is built together ith the "Helligåndskirken" (Church of the Holy Ghost), into lecture ooms for the Practical-Theological Seminary and a work centre of the hurch.

In a recommendation to the Pharoese "Lagting" (Representative Coun- il) two of the three Members of Government have advocated that an office f a Deputy Bishop be established on the Pharoe Isles. The "Lagtinget" s expected to decide on the matter very soon.

FINLAND

erious Shortage of Clergymen in Finland.

The happy increase in the number of divinity students in Finland recent years has not as yet been able to counteract the shortage of lergymen in the Lutheran National Church in Finland. On the contrary, his has grown more serious in the last twelve months, the present de- iciency amounting to 65 clergymen, according to figures supplied by the arious Cathedral Chapters. A year ago the number was roughly 50. Worst f are the Dioceses of Kuopio with a shortage of 15 ministers, the rchdiocese and the Diocese of Mikkeli (St. Michel) being short of 12 lergymen each, and the Diocese of Oulu (Uleåborg), needing 10 clergymen. n the other dioceses there are 2-5 vacant livings. 10 parishes are quit ithout ministers, viz. 4 parishes in the Archdiocese, 4 in the Diocese f Oulu (Uleåborg) and 1 in the Dioceses of Mikkeli (St. Michel) and orgå (Porvoo) respectively. 5 of the 20 full-time military charges re held by ministers who have another encumbency besides, and one of the ilitary charges is vacant. The salaries of military chaplains are lower han those of other clergymen.

he President Appeals for Repentance and Prayer.

According to traditional practice the President of Finland, Dr. Urho ekkonen, has published a so-called "Prayer Day Poster" in which he ap- eals for the observance of four thanksgiving-, repentance-, and prayer ays in 1961. The "poster" stresses the importance of the Finnish na- ion's spiritual state of health and moral integrity, emphasizing the en Commandments as a basis for morality, and the Christian education in ome and school as a guide for the young generation growing up. The text oes on:

"The standard of morality has been lowered and the conceptions of ight or wrong have been dimmed according as the voice of conscience as been silenced. If the moral standards of the nation are to be pre- erved and faith in life strengthened, then the word of God must be evered and the fear of Him implanted in the hearts of men and women."

In his New Year address over the radio and on television the Pre- ident expressed the hope that Finland, for centuries the stormy border ountry between East and West, may now put to constructive use this uniqu osition in safeguarding her own peace and in serving as a bridge builder etween the Eastern and Western powers. He felt that the Finnish nation

advancing into a bright future and, in contradiction of those who ve a dark picture of the situation, the President was in full agree- nt with a Finnish clergyman's remarks: "We have a good native country, owing ever more sensible and stronger."

rchentag on the Youth Problem.

The Finnish Kirchentag at Savonlinna (Nyslott) in January was con- ntrated around the problem of youth and resulted in a number of new terprises in this area of life. A proposal was carried that a thorough vestigation of the needs and demands of young people be started, in- uding the issues of dancing and other kinds of entertainment. Further- re, the speedy establishment of a central Church organization for uth work was advocated, and a resolution passed, requesting Government take steps against pornography. Yet another resolution was passed, questing the Church management to go more closely into the matter of e employment of its workers in the congregations, emphasizing that rk methods must conform to present day requirements. The Industrial mmittee of the Finnish Congregational Union was asked to investigate e possibility of mothers being employed as only part time workers as means of strengthening home life. Finally, it was advocated that the urch decide on its attitude to unemployment, especially among young ople; that urban congregations show more concern for young people ving from the country into towns; and that physical labour be more spected in the Church than hitherto.

sh for Continuation of Morning Devotions.

The Union of Finnish Instructors of Religion have conducted a survey connection with morning devotions in schools, from which it appears at 84% of the students and 98,7% of the teachers are in favour of con- nuing with morning devotions, while only 2,5% of the pupils and 0,3% the teachers want them to discontinue. 13,5% of the students and of the instructors answered "I do not know".

It was rather strange to note that the greater part of the negative swers were from children in the lower grades, the answers growing more d more positive according as the children grew older.

ntral Church Fund Support of Poor Congregations.

In 1960 the Central Fund of the Lutheran National Church in Finland ent 233 million Finnish Marks in aid of poor congregations. The Cent- l Fund was established some 20 years ago, each congregation contribut- g to it according to the church taxes assessed in each congregation. e money thus obtained for the Central Fund is administered by the urch Board and used partly in aid of congregations in straitened cir- mstances, partly for joint Church undertakings, and partly for pensions clergymen, cantors and deaconesses, In 1960 the last two items amount- to 133 million Marks and 221 million Marks respectively.

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NORWAY

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In the near future the Norwegian Minister of Church Affairs, Mr. lge Sivertsen, will submit the matter of laymen's access to ecclesias-cal offices in the Lutheran National Church to the Bishops, the Theo-gical Faculties, the Clergymen's Association and various religious ganizations for their opinion.

The issue was raised in the "Stortinget" (Parliament) by Rev. lbjørn Varmann, Rural Dean, at the middle of January. The Dean pecially advocated that people with another higher training than the eological one should be permitted to take orders. Referring to Swe-n where 80 clergymen without a theological degree are employed in the theran National Church and to Denmark where there are 11 such ministers, felt that such an arrangement would prove a strengthening of the urch. The reason for the proposal was not the shortage of clergymen ginning to make itself felt, especially in Northern Norway.

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The Norwegian weekly "Vår Kirke" expresses its appreciation of the dertaking and concludes a leading article on the matter with the words:

"These tokens of expiation will emanate a strong appeal to our ople and our Church not to harden our hearts, but to show willingness rselves to follow the path of penance and better lives. An appeal r forgiveness possesses creative power, unless we make reservations d meet it with distrust. But wherever the appeal is heard and accepted will create a new hope and new possibilities."

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oposal for Confirmation in the 8th or 9th Year of School.

The Committee set up by the Norwegian Bishops' Conference in 1959 o go into the matter of confirmation in relation to the 9 years of chool now required by law has published its report. This report pro- oses that preparation for confirmation should normally take place uring the 8th or 9th year of school, and during the same year of school n all the schools in the same municipality or parish.

The Committee further suggests that the instruction should be given ither during the first two lessons of a certain day in the week, as greed upon in consultation with the school authorities, or in 3-4 weeks f "confirmation school" late in the school year. So far the preparatio or confirmation has usually taken place after school hours.

orwegian President of the Lutheran Church in the Cameroons.

At a meeting of delegates at Ngaoundère the Constitution of an in- ependent Lutheran Church in the North Cameroons, a fruit of American nd Norwegian evangelization in that district, was adopted, the inde- endence coming into force last December. A Norwegian missionary, Rev. alfdan Endresen, was elected President and a Cameroon minister, Rev. 'aul Darman, Vice President.

For several years the American and Norwegian mission churches have been working towards this goal. The new Church numbers some 10.000 members.

Norwegian Missionary Council and the World Council of Churches.

The issue of a possible consultative status of the Norwegian Missionary Council in the new Commission on World Mission and Evan- gelization to be established at the time of integration between the International Missionary Council and the World Council of Churches next autumn has been the subject of an animated discussion in the religious Press, not the least in the Christian daily in Oslo "Vårt Land".

In an article Bishop Fridjov Birkeli points out that when the opponents of a consultative status argue their standpoint to be due to a fear of liberal theology in the World Council of Churches. They should have the same misgivings with regard to participation in the activities of the Lutheran World Federation, the Christian councils on the mission fields, and even the Northern Missionary Council, in as much as instances of liberal theology may be encountered every- where. The Bishop inquires whether the opponents also contemplate severing connections with Churches on the mission field which join the World Council of Churches.

Professor Carl Fr. Wisløff maintains that developments in the ecumenical movement have gone in the direction of a world church and that one must break with the World Council of Churches at this stage as a protest against this trend. As to the relationship with the Lutheran World Federation, this must depend on the future course of the Federation. With regard to the young Churches there has been no talk of severing connections with them in the case of their joining the World Council of Churches. At the moment the important point is to show them a good example by abstaining from even a consultative re- lation to the new Commission.

Other prominent men in Church and Foreign Missions have likewise taken part in the discussion. The question of consultative status in the Commission will probably be decided at the meeting of the Norwegian Missionary Council on February 17th. Last autumn the Council was practically unanimous in rejecting an ordinary affiliation to the Commission

SWEDEN

Church and State discussed by the Bishops.

The Bishops' Conference held from January 23rd - 27th gave much time to a discussion of "Church and State". The Bishop of Gothenburg Bo Giertz introduced this item. Another big item was "Church and People" which was introduced by the Bishop of Härnösand Dr. Ruben Josefson who paid special attention to the responsibility and influence of the laymen.

At the next Bishops' Conference, which will be held from April 20th - 22nd, among other things the ecumenical situation in Sweden will be discussed.

Bishops' Conference Requests Investigation on Matrimonial Legislation.

As indicated in CN No. 63 a Swedish minister has been sentenced for refusal to marry a young couple because one of them was divorced. In his reply (CN No. 64) to the Swedish Parliamentary Commissioner for the Judiciary and the Civil Administration in connection with some questions on the Confessional Front ("Kyrklig Samling") the Archbishop of Uppsala Dr. Gunnar Hultgren expressed his opinion that everything should be done in order to avoid that legal proceedings are taken against a Church minister when he is only acting in accordance with his religious conviction. Now the Bishops' Conference has decided to send a delegation to the Government Minister of Justice which shall underline that an investigation should be made with the aim to release the clergy from the duty to marry people in such cases when a religious marriage would not be in accordance with Church order. Already in 1953 the Church Assembly requested the Government for such an investigation, and in 1957 the Church Assembly repeated its request.

No recommendation for individual communion-cups.

The National Swedish Board of Health has expressed its opinion that individual communion-cups should be used because there is a risk of infection when all communicants receive the wine from the same cup. The Bishops' Conference, however, has decided not to recommend individual cups because there is a long and firm tradition behind the use of one common cup. Yet, the Bishops think that individual cups should be used when desired by the congregation.

The Church and the Traffic Accidents.

The Bishops' Conference of the Lutheran National Church of Sweden has dealt with the great number of human lives - about 1.000 a year - which the motor traffic costs. The Bishops expressed their opinion that the Church must pay attention to this question which is closely connected with the responsibility for one's brother and also with the fifth commandment. The Home Mission Board has proposed that the traffic problems should be dealt with in the confirmation instruction

and that a pamphlet should be given to people who visit the church offices in order to get a birth certificate needed for obtaining a motor-licence. The Bishops are now expecting to hear the opinion of motor and traffic organizations with regard to these proposals.

American Church in Stockholm?

Next summer the Augustana Church in the U.S.A. will discuss the idea of erecting an American church in Stockholm. In January Dr. Theodore E. Matson from Minneapolis, Director of the Home Mission of the Augustana Lutheran Church, who was asked to investigate the matter, paid a visit to Stockholm. Here he learnt that there are roughly 600 Americans living in Stockholm, that many of his compatriots stay there for a shorter period, and that 90 - 100 American under-graduates are studying there, to which figures may be added 75,000 tourists, most of them visiting during summer.

Should a church actually be erected in Stockholm, it will be common to all American protestants in the city. Most probably the encouraging experiences in connection with the American Lutheran congregation in Oslo have greatly influenced the plans for an American church in Stockholm.

According to Press reports, American church people in Stockholm have taken the initiative in arranging for regular divine services in English every other Sunday since March 1958. Even earlier a Sunday school in English for children, young people and adults was started. In 1960 this school was attended by 125 pupils. Sunday school classes as well as divine services take place in the Baptist Church of Bethel in the centre of Stockholm, Dr. Joel Sörenson, Minister of the Church of Bethel, having been lent to this work by his congregation. The audience at these services belong to various American denominations.

Exchange of pulpits.

An unusual instance of home ecumenicity has taken place in Stockholm. The Rev. Martin Zetterquist, Rural Dean, of the Lutheran Church of Mary Magdalen and Rev. Henry Atterling of the Methodist congregation of St. Paul have exchanged pulpits. On January 22nd Rev. Atterling preached in the Church of Mary Magdalen, Dean M. Zetterquist conducting the Liturgy. On the following Sunday Dean M. Zetterquist preached in the Methodist church. This form of ecumenicity is not common in Sweden.

"Older" Free Churches on the Decline.

During the last decades the three "older" Free Churches in Sweden, the Baptist Church, the Methodist Church and the Swedish Mission Covenant Church have been on a steady decline while the Pentecostal Movement has been on the increase, according to Mr. Erland Sundström, Editor, in the weekly paper of the Mission Covenant Church the "Svensk Veckotidning". Since 1940 the membership of the Baptist Church has gone down from 46,700 to 32,540, that of the Methodist Church from 13,400 to 11,250 and of the Mission Covenant Church from 108,000 to 96,750. In the same period the Pentecostal Movement has gone up from 80,000 to 92,000 members. The Evangelical National Missionary Society, a pietistic organization within the Lutheran National Church, to-day numbers only 40,000 members as against 100,000 in 1940.

and that a pamphlet should be given to people who visit the church offices in order to get a birth certificate needed for obtaining a motor-license. The Bishops are now expecting to hear the opinion of motor and traffic organizations with regard to these proposals.

American Church in Stockholm.

Next summer the Augustana Church in the U.S.A. will discuss the idea of erecting an American church in Stockholm. In January Dr. Theodore R. Nelson from Minneapolis, Director of the Home Mission of the Augustana Lutheran Church, who was asked to investigate the matter, paid a visit to Stockholm. Here he learnt that there are roughly 6000 Americans living in Stockholm, that many of his compatriots stay there for a shorter period, and that 90 - 100 American under-graduates are studying there, to which figures may be added 15,000 tourists most of them visiting during summer.

Should a church actually be erected in Stockholm, it will be common to all American protestants in the city. Most probably the encouraging experiences in connection with the American Lutheran congregation in Oslo have greatly influenced the plans for an American church in Stockholm.

According to Press reports, American church people in Stockholm have taken the initiative in arranging for regular divine services in English every other Sunday since March 1939. Even earlier a Sunday school in English for children, young people and adults was started. In 1940 this school was attended by 125 pupils. Sunday school classes as well as divine services take place in the Baptist Church of Bethel in the centre of Stockholm, Dr. Joel Ericsson, Minister of the Church of Bethel, having been lent to this work by his congregation. The audience at these services belong to various American denominations.

Exchange of pulpits.

An unusual instance of home ecumenicity has taken place in Stockholm. The Rev. Martin Lefstrulet, Rural Dean, of the Lutheran Church of Mary Magdalen and Rev. Henry Atterling of the Methodist congregation of St. Paul have exchanged pulpits. On January 22nd Rev. Atterling preached in the Church of Mary Magdalen, Dean M. Lefstrulet conducting the liturgy. On the following Sunday Dean M. Lefstrulet preached in the Methodist church. This form of ecumenicity is not common in Sweden.

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Taken all in one, the membership of the three "older" Free Churches amounts to 4,5% of the whole population in 1920, 3,31% in 1940 and 2,43% in 1960. The Pentecostal Movement and the Örebro Mission (Baptist) were founded after 1920. If their numbers are included the total membership of the Free Churches amounted to 5,3% of the population in 1940 and 4,36% in 1960.

The total number of members over 15 years of age in the Free Churches and the Evangelical National Missionary Society amounts to 357,140 to which may be added 375,000 children and young people taking part in their youth work. Although not members, quite a number of people more or less regularly attend the Free Church services, so that Mr. Sundström feels that an estimate of one million Swedes connected with a Free Church in some way or other cannot be far wrong.

The total population of Sweden is just under 8 million people.

The Church of the Mission Covenant Church of Sweden in the Congo Becomes Independent.

The Church established on the mission field by the Mission Covenant Church of Sweden in the former Belgian Congo has now achieved complete independence. This was decided at a recent synod at Kibunzi on which occasion the Congelese minister, Rev. Daniel Luyindu, was elected President of the Church Board which consists of 4 natives and 3 Swedish missionaries. All former mission property has been taken over by the new independent Church.

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